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WINDHAM

Sister City Committee

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HIGHLIGHTS OF 2005

DECEMBER: Windham and Suzdal, Russia have been in partnership since 1992. The relationship was instituted by John Barry and others. Over the years, the relationship has grown so that today many Windham people have close friends in Suzdal. Each year the committee tries to visit Suzdal and encourage Suzdal citizens to visit here. This year there were two trips to Suzdal by members of the Committee. In April, John Breda and Barbara Coish traveled there. In addition to visiting our usual friends and businesses, John spent time teaching at a university in Vladimir and spending a day at a school in the settlement of Pavelskoe. In August, Elizabeth Williams and Barbara Coish visited Suzdal for two weeks. One of the highlights of the trip was attending the annual Town Day celebrating Suzdal's anniversary. Suzdal is 981 years old this year and perhaps older as artifacts are being found suggesting earlier inhabitants.

The committee undertakes many projects to aid the people of Suzdal. Assistance for the children in orphanages #3 and #5 is tops on our list. The easiest way for us to help these children is to bring them cash donations. In recent years, the Town of Windham budget has included a line item of \$500.00, which is donated annually to the Directors of these two orphanages to be used for the needs of the children. In addition to this donation, the mission committee of the Windham Presbyterian Church has annually increased this amount with a donation of their own of \$1000. This year we particularly noticed the wonderful renovations at the building housed by #3 orphanage. Many of the renovations can be directly attributed to our financial assistance.

Over the years, we have assisted the women of the quilt club, *Suzdal Swatch*. These women make handmade wall hanging quilts depicting different themes. Each is a wonderful work of art, which can never be exactly duplicated. The committee sells these and returns 100% of the funds to the author of the quilt.

Many new businesses and small hotels have been added to the community in recent years. There are many choices of fine places in which to stay in Suzdal. These hotels will only help to increase the desirability of the town as a tourist destination for people around Russia and all over the world.

On October 16, 2005, Suzdal held a local election. A new head of Administration was elected. His name is Sergei Borisovich Godunin. With this change in Administration, the Sister City Committee expects to see Suzdal reaching out more to all of her sister towns, Evora, Portugal, Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Germany, Cles, Italy and Windham.

Barbara Coish, Chairman

NEW ADMINISTRATION IN SUZDAL, OCTOBER: The Sister City Committee and Mr. David Sullivan have been notified of the results of the election in Suzdal on October 16th. The Sister City Committee received emails and Mr. Sullivan received a FAX at Town Hall.

There were seven candidates opposing the Administrator Andrei Ryzhov, who has been the mayor for the past four years. Members of the committee are familiar with some of those who ran for the post. Olga Kitaeva, a doctor and elected Town Councilor for the past several years was the first woman ever to run for the position of mayor. She placed 4th in the field and although disappointed, she was happy to say that she ran a clean, honest and good campaign. She will run for an open seat on the Town Council that will be elected in December.

The winner of the election is Sergei Borisovich Godunin, a gentleman who members have met in the past. He was a member of the Town Council and his business is a plant that produces a drink made from honey called "medovuka". Members of the committee toured this plant during a recent visit and found it to be a great asset to the town of Suzdal. Sergei Godunin is a very good businessman and he is also very willing to reach out to Suzdal's Sister Cities in Evora, Portugal; Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Germany; Cles, Italy and Windham. These are two very good qualities that should help to lead to a very successful new administration. We have sent messages of congratulations to Mayor Godunin. The committee will publish updates when new information arrives from Suzdal and we encourage folks to read about our relationship here.

VISIT TO SUZDAL, AUGUST: Bette Williams and Barbara Coish, Sister City Committee members returned to Suzdal from August 10th to August 22nd. In addition to meeting with old friends and seeing familiar sites, the Windham representatives were able to see and participate in new things as well.

As always, the Town of Suzdal finds many reasons to have a celebration. This time, the Windham visitors were treated to two different ones. Town Day is annually held in August. It is a celebration of the birthday of the Town. This year Suzdal is 981 years old. During the day, there are souvenir tables everywhere, singing and dancing acts on a stage in the square and fireworks at night. The weather was pleasant that day as it was through out the visit. On the following weekend there was a resurrection of an old holiday, which was the blessing of the harvest of apples and honey. This year the event was held on the grounds of the monastery and the bishop was there to bless all those selling their fruit and honey.

An exciting new thing for the town is the opening of a private dental clinic with the appropriate name of "Smile". Svetlana Rodionova made the decision to open this clinic with the assistance of her husband Sergei. They went to Germany to purchase the equipment and they have set up a very nice facility that will be a great asset to the citizens of Suzdal. Sergei acts as a very friendly greeter and receptionist. This couple working together will be a success story in the future.

A visit is not ever complete without a stop at the two orphanages. This time a little financial gift from individuals was donated to these children. The Director of Orphanage #3 has done a magnificent job of rehabilitating her building and she was recently named the best director in the area. A new place on the list of sites to visit was the Rehabilitation Center. This is a place where children may go temporarily if there are problems in the home while professionals work with the family to try to unite the family once again. It is hoped that this step will help to avoid sending more children to the orphanages. This center is well equipped although the visitors thought that the children would benefit greatly from having a computer upon which to learn skills. Children at this center range in age from 3-16.

Many new hotels of the bed and breakfast style have popped up in Suzdal. This time two more were visited. Travelers to Suzdal have a great number of reasonably priced fine places in to which to stay during a visit.

During a visit in May the librarian asked if the committee could bring some books in English about the real America. Several books were obtained at the Strawberry Festival and carried there during this visit. The Suzdal Library also has the entire Harry Potter collection in English as a gift from the committee. All books donated to the Suzdal Library are given in memory of the late Olga Surikova, the subject of a Scholastic Book about Suzdal.

The usual visit to the quilters took a side trip to the city of Ivanova where a tour of a fabric factory was held. In this 250 year old building workers were printing lovely designs upon the fabric. The working conditions there were less than to American standards as it was very loud, dimly lit and odors were irritating for the workers.

The quilt club has once again sent several new quilts here. These are for sale and make wonderful clever gifts for the person who has everything. Anyone interested in seeing these quilts may call Barbara Coish at 898 9520.

On October 16th there will be an election in Suzdal. A mayor and 15 town councilors will be elected. All of Suzdal's sister cities are hopeful for a good result on that date, one which will increase Suzdal's contacts with her partner towns in Portugal, Germany, Italy and the United States.

Also in August, a conference of towns with sister cities with Russian partnerships was held in Saratoga Springs, New York. Representatives from many towns in the northeast were present at this very successful event. Windham's committee was represented by J and Carol Gross. It is hoped that this kind of get together will become an annual event in which ideas and accomplishments may be shared.



LEFT: Barbara Coish and Bette Williams are pictured in the new dentist office with Svetlana Rodionova and her husband Sergei.



RIGHT: Boris Bykov (who visited here with the students in May 2004) is pictured with his mother and grandfather at the blessing of the honey. His family has over 60 hives of bees.

VISIT TO SUZDAL, APRIL/MAY: During school vacation week, John Breda and Barbara Coish traveled to Suzdal, Russia, Windham's Sister City. Each visitor had a different agenda during the trip.

John had been invited to interact with students who are studying the English language at the University in Vladimir. It is important for these students to interact with native speakers. John was able to accomplish this goal on Monday and Tuesday of our visit. The students were greatly appreciative and happy to have John interact with them during their classes. On Wednesday, we visited the Settlement School in Pavelskoy We visited all classes and all ages. We shall return to this school in the future for a longer interaction with the teachers and students.

Everywhere people were cleaning the territory in preparation for the celebration of Victory Day on May 9th. Fires were burning on every street as people burned leaves and branches left on the ground after the winter. Even school children and children at the orphanages were cleaning the territory around their buildings. Each year everyone is engaged in this rite of spring.

We went to Orphanages #3 and #5 (Children's Homes #3 and #5) to deliver aid from Windham. Carrying cash donations has become the easiest and most efficient way to get the desired help to these children. Donations were made by the Mission Committee of the Windham Presbyterian Church, a line item for support in the budget of the Town of Windham and two different individuals. The orphanage directors were able to tell us specific items that needed attention. At both buildings new windows, new fences, new handmade bedcovers and special medications were on the list of desired projects.

On our visit to the Suzdal library, we delivered books on recent American Presidents and four copies of Russian Life Magazine. The library staff would like to have copies of books and CDs in English that represent a true depiction of American life and history.

As usual we visited the quilters of the Suzdal Swatch. They have sent about fifteen new quilts that are for sale. In August we would like to carry some new fabric to the quilters. If anyone has some fabric they wish to donate please contact the committee.

The students and teachers who visited Windham in May 2004 held a reception for us. They recalled their educational time in New Hampshire and send warm greetings to their host families. Some improvements are happening in the town that will have a positive influence upon the economy of Suzdal.

We visited a new hotel that will open within the next month. It consists of several rehabilitated buildings and several new wooden buildings. There are plans to extend this complex even further. In another trip, we went to a new facility that is producing ceramic products many of which are copies of ancient ceramic pieces. John and Barbara were able to get their hands into the clay and formed pots using the electrically driven potter's wheel. It was messy and fun!

The most interesting event is the possibility of the implementation of a plan to make Suzdal and several other towns into settlements. Although there will be very little change in the administration of government, the people of Suzdal do not want this change. The decision is now in the courts. Should the new governmental arrangement take place, new elections will happen on October 16th. If Suzdal remains a town as presently set up the new elections will not be until March 2006. In either case the next election should bring positive changes to the people and government of Suzdal.